

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05
ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SCS-06 CA-01 PC-01 AID-05
MCT-01 EB-08 COME-00 STR-07 FRB-03 /144 W
-----072945 211506Z /15

O 211322Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9871
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
UNINT HAVANA 044
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMCONSL LUBUMBASHI
AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE POUCH
USUN NEW YORK 1561
AMCONSUL BUKAVU POUCH
AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 5120

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG
SUBJECT: SHABA ATTACK: SOME IMPLICATIONS OF KOLWEZI

REF: KINSHASA 5060

1. THE MASS EXODUS FROM KOLWEZI CONTINUES THIS MORNING MAY 21. I
HAVE TALKED AT LENGTH WITH SEVERAL OF THE AMERICAN EVACUEES. METHODIST
MISSIONARY AMSTUTZ AND HIS WIFE WHO WERE IN THE EUROPEAN RESIDENTIAL
QUARTERS; CATHOLIC PRIEST WAGNER WHO WAS AT THE BELGIAN COLLEGE
WHERE MORE THAN 100 EUROPEANS TOOK REFUGE; AND CATHOLIC PRIEST
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MESSERICH WHO WAS IN THE AFRICAN QUARTERS. BASED ON THIS SPECTRUM
OF FIRST-HAND OBSERVATIONS, IT IS REASONBLY CLEAR
THAT:

--THE ATTACK ON KOLWEZI WAS CAREFULLY PLANNED AND WELL IMPLEMENTED
;
IT INVOLVED SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF KATANGANS WHO CAME FROM BASES

IN ANGOLA;
--THERE IS AS YET NO FIRM EVIDENCE OF CUBAN OR OTHER NON-AFRICAN PARTICIPATION;
--FAZ PERFORMANCE IN DEFENDING KOLWEZI WAS INEFFECTIVE;
--THE LOCAL ZAIRIAN POPULATION WAS GENERALLY APATHETIC;
--THE KATANGANS FOCUSED ON TERRORIZING THE EXPATRIATES;
--THE EXPATRIATES WILL ALL LEAVE KOLWEZI, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY.

ALL THAT WE HAVE HEARD SUBSTANTIATES THE THESIS EXPRESSED REFTTEL: THAT THE KATANGANS OBJECTIVE WAS TO DRIVE OUT THE EXPATRIATES, SHUT DOWN THE COPPER INDUSTRY, CRIPPLE ZAIRE'S ALREADY FEEBLE ECONOMY AND BRING DOWN THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT.

2. IN FACT IT NOW LOOKS AS IF KOLWEZI WILL SHORTLY BE A GHOST TOWN. WE BELIEVE THAT FEW IF ANY EXPATRIATES WILL REMAIN. THOSE WHO ARE LEAVING ARE UNLIKELY TO RETURN UNLESS AND UNTIL THEY ARE ASSURED OF BETTER SECURITY (E.G. EUROPEAN TROOPS) THAN FAZ ALONE CAN PROVIDE. THE EXPATRIATES HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN FAZ'S CAPABILITY TO DEFEND KOLWEZI AGAINST ANOTHER KATANGAN ATTACK, WHICH THEY CONSIDER LIKELY ONCE BELGIAN AND FRENCH TROOPS WITHDRAW. KOLWEZI'S LARGE INDIGENOUS POPULATION (APPROX. 150,000), FACED WITH NO WORK AND FEARING RETRIBUTION

FROM THE GOVERNMENT, HAS ALREADY STARTED ABANDONING THE CITY FOR THE BUSH. THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THE KOLWEZI EVACUATION WILL TRIGGER THE EXODUS OF EXPATRIATES ELSEWHERE IN THE COPPERBELT.
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3. THE BROADER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE KOLWEZI ATTACK ARE EXTREMELY SERIOUS. ANY APPRECIABLE INTERRUPTION OF COPPER PRODUCTION - AND THAT NOW SEEMS ASSURED - WILL HAVE A SEVERE IMPACT ON ZAIRE'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS AND AGGRAVATE THE ALREADY DESPERATE STATE OF THE ECONOMY. IMPENDING MEASURES OF REFORM AND RECOVERY, SUCH AS A NEW IMF PROGRAM AND A NEW LOAN FROM PRIVATE BANKERS, ARE NOW PLACED IN DOUBT. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN SHABA SEEM BOUND TO DETERIORATE. IN THE DAYS AHEAD WE WILL BE ASSESSING THESE AND OTHER ECONOMIC RAMIFICATIONS AND DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POSSIBLE U.S. ACTIONS. BUT IT IS ALREADY EVIDENT THAT KOLWEZI WILL ADD A NEW, URGENT DIMENSION FOR THE ZAIRIAN PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PLIGHT AND CREATE INCREASED DEMANDS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM ZAIRE'S DONOR/CREDITOR FRIENDS.

4. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL HOW KOLWEZI MAY IMPACT ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE. THE ATROCITIES ARE NOT LIKELY TO ATTRACT MUCH SYMPATHY OR SUPPORT FOR THE KATANGANS AMONG THE POPULATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, FAZ'S FAILURE AND APPARENT LACK OF RESOLVE WILL PROBABLY SERVE TO WEAKEN FURTHER PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN AND RESPECT FOR THE MOBUTU REGIME, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR EVEN TOUGHER TIMES

AHEAD AS A RESULT OF THE COPPER CLOSE-DOWN SEEMS BOUND TO HEIGHTEN
ANTI-REGIME SENTIMENT. AGAIN, WE WILL BE ASSESSING THE POLITICAL
SCENE
CAREFULLY IN THE DAYS AHEAD; BUT AS WE CONSIDER POSSIBLE RESPONSES
TO ZAIRE'S ECONOMIC AND SECURITY NEEDS, WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT
MOBUTU'S POPULAR SUPPORT HAS GRADUALLY ERODED DURING THE PAST THREE
YEARS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DETERIORATION, AND THE ADDITIONAL
PROBLEMS CREATED BY KOLWEZI MAY WELL SERVE TO WEAKEN FURTHER
HIS POLITICAL POSITION.
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